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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 001029

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DEPT FOR SCA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/23/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [NP](#)
SUBJECT: APRIL 23 PARTIES KEEP DEMONSTRATING

REF: A. KATHMANDU 1021

[1](#)B. KATHMANDU 1015
[1](#)C. KATHMANDU 1020

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) On April 23, day eighteen of the Parties' general strike and protest program, large scale pro-democracy demonstrations continued throughout Nepal. Despite the government's day-time curfew and cutting off cell phone service, more than one hundred thousand protesters demonstrated in Kathmandu, though reports suggested the crowds were significantly smaller than on April 22. Following the seven-party alliance's April 22 statement rejecting the King's April 21 offer to hand over power to the Parties (septel), Party leaders had vowed to keep pressure on the King and continued to encourage people to take to the streets. On April 22, more than one hundred thousand demonstrators moved past security blockades on the Ring Road and started toward the King's Palace in the center of the city, something not done since the Parties' general strike began on April 6. Party leaders warned that unless the King reinstated Parliament, they could not control the demonstrations much longer. While no new deaths were reported on April 22 or 23, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) cautioned Emboff that there was "a widespread feeling" that demonstrations would now become "more aggressive and violent." NGOs worried that children were being forced to take part in the demonstrations, and were sustaining injuries. End Summary.

Parties Encourage People to Continue to Demonstrate

[1](#)2. (C) Large scale pro-democracy demonstrations continued throughout Nepal on April 23. Following the seven-party alliance's April 22 statement rejecting the King's April 21 offer (ref A) to hand over power to the Parties, Party leaders vowed to keep pressure on the King (septel) and continued to encourage people to take to the streets. On April 23, despite the government issuing a 0900-2000 day-time

curfew in Kathmandu (for the forth day in a row) and cutting off cell-phone service since the afternoon of April 22, large numbers of people again took to the streets. Media also reported large demonstrations throughout the country. While no new deaths were reported on April 22 or 23, OHCHR cautioned Emboff that there was "a widespread feeling" that demonstrations would now become "more aggressive and violent." According to police sources, protesters were cutting down trees, and pulling down electric lines to block traffic on the Ring Road on April 23. Emboffs noticed a degradation of phone service. After curfew began, Emboffs observed a virtual shutdown of the center of Kathmandu, with shops and businesses shuttered and only vehicles with curfew passes on the streets. However, domestic and international flights were operating on schedule. On April 22, one convoy of 19 food trucks, 5 light vehicles, and 4 buses did reach Kathmandu, but none were expected April 23. However, the convoy contained no gas or cooking fuel, commodities that are desperately needed in the capital.

Protesters Moved Toward Center of Kathmandu

¶3. (C) On April 22, despite a 1200-2000 day time curfew, for the first time since the Parties' general strike began on April 6, almost twenty thousand demonstrators moved past security blockades on the Ring Road, entered a prohibited area, and started toward the King's Palace in the center of the city. OHCHR reported that security forces "brutally stopped" a large group of demonstrators near the national stadium, approximately 1 km from the Palace. Police fired tear gas and rubber bullets into the crowd. Newspapers reported that security forces injured about 250 demonstrators in Kathmandu on April 22. RNA sources told Emboff there had been a "miscommunication" between the RNA and the police about how to control the demonstrators. The sources noted that the RNA and police had agreed that April 23 they would try to stop protest groups from merging and getting out of hand, something they had not attempted to do on April 22. Media reported large demonstrations throughout the country on April 22, including over 200,000 people in the western terai town of Butwal. Large, mostly peaceful protests were also conducted in Pokhara, Birgunj, Chitwan and Jhapa. In Nepalgunj, Banke District, rickshaw pullers and horse carriage operators participated in the rallies waving Party flags. In Bardiya District, thousands of people participated in the funeral of a man who died of bullet injuries sustained during a peaceful demonstration there on April 19 (ref B).

Parties Worry They Can't Control Crowds Much Longer

¶4. (C) On April 23, K.P. Oli, CPN-UML Central Committee member, told Emboff that the King had to act as soon as possible or the Parties would not be able to control the crowds. Oli warned that, to date, the Parties had control of the demonstrations. However, if the King delayed handing back power, "there will be bloodshed." Gopal Man Shrestha, Nepali Congress (Democratic) Central Committee member, also told Emboff on April 23 that the King had to act quickly. Until the King reinstated Parliament, the seven-parties had agreed to continue with their general strike and were urging people to take to the streets.

Ceremonial King Still Possible...

¶5. (C) Oli explained that he and all other CPN-UML leaders still supported a constitutional monarchy. He stressed that this included Bam Dev Gautam and Jhala Nath Khanal, two CPN-UML cadre whom the government had arrested on April 21 as they returned from New Delhi where they had been since negotiating the Parties' March 16 agreement with Maoists (ref C). He said that the government had since released the two, and they had subsequently participated in the seven-party alliance meeting on April 22 to discuss the King's April 21 offer. Oli explained that even if the Maoists would not agree to keeping the monarchy, the Parties were prepared to

guarantee the King a ceremonial role, if he would immediately transfer all power to the people by reinstating Parliament. Shrestha also reported that all members of the seven-party alliance agreed on April 22 that, if the King reinstated Parliament, they would guarantee him a role as a ceremonial monarch.

...but King Must Accept Parties' Plan

16. (C) Oli explained that the Parties could not trust the King's April 21 offer, as the King had similarly appointed Prime Minister Deuba in 2004 under Article 35, and later dismissed him. Only if the King reinstated Parliament, could the seven parties form a government among themselves. The Parties then would talk to the Maoists, and work to have an interim government with the Maoists, but this would require a cease-fire, and managing Maoist weapons. Then they could hold a constituent assembly. Shrestha echoed Oli's point that the King had appointing Deuba, and Gyanendra's April 21 offer still would have allowed the King to dismiss a seven-party alliance-appointed Prime Minister. Shrestha acknowledged that to make the plan work, the seven-parties would have to share in the decision-making with communities that had been underrepresented in Parliament to date, such as ethnic communities, terai people, dalits, and women. "We know we must work on this," he continued, "but first, the King must act."

Children Joining in Protests

17. (C) Local NGO Child Workers in Nepal (CWIN) released a report on April 23 saying that children working in the transportation sector, school-going children, and street children were participating in the protest movement. CWIN reported that between April 6 and April 20, 182 children below the age of 18 had sought hospital treatment for demonstration related injuries. Among the 81 children under age 16, three had serious injuries. OHCHR was looking into allegations that demonstrators were offering students 250 rupees (3.50 USD) to join rallies, and further "rewards" for throwing stones. The English language Himalayan Times quoted CWIN spokesman, Tarak Dhital, saying, "it is no surprise to witness children participating in the ongoing protests since they have much time to spare, and youthful energy to boot." However, he noted that it was the responsibility of the State, as well as the society and their parents, to protect the children from dangers involved in demonstrations.

Comment

18. (C) Party leaders still appear to be holding out hope the King will act, as they fear losing control of the pro-democracy demonstrators. Yesterday's rain helped break up the protests in Kathmandu, but the skies are clear today. Never-the-less, the crowds appear to be smaller than April 22, possibly because the government cut cell phone service, making it difficult for organizers to coordinate the demonstrations.

MORIARTY